WEEKLY TORAH AND PROPHETS PORTION

# LECH LECHA

## A CALL THAT CHANGES EVERYTHING

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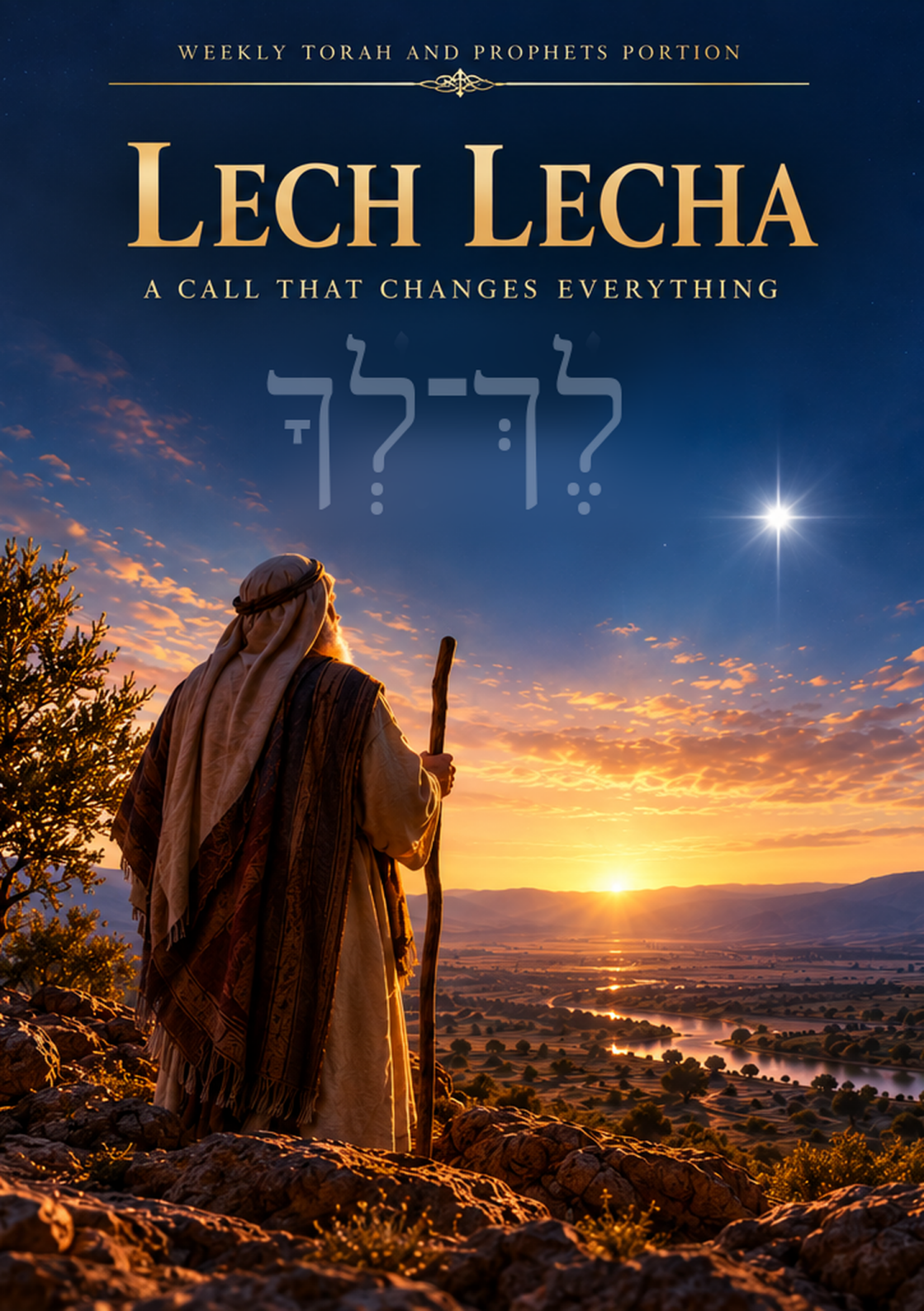

YOVEL PUBLICATIONS

# LECH LECHA

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*Go Forth, Yourself*

THE WEEKLY TORAH & PROPHETS

*Torah: Genesis 12:1–17:27*
*Haftarah: Isaiah 40:27–41:16*

SCRIPTURE SOURCE

Scripture quotations are based on the World Messianic Bible British Edition (WMBB), a public-domain translation. Where the WMBB renders the Hebrew Divine Name as LORD or GOD, Yovel Publications uses YHVH in accordance with its house style. Such adaptations are editorial choices of Yovel Publications and are not part of the original WMBB text.

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# WHY READ THE WEEKLY TORAH PORTION?

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For thousands of years, the people of God have gathered around the Scriptures to hear the words of Moses and the Prophets. The first followers of Yeshua did not regard these Scriptures as something belonging to a discarded religion or a bygone age. They were the Scriptures from which the Good News of Messiah was proclaimed.

The book of Acts gives us a wonderful glimpse of this practice. When Paul and his companions entered the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia on the Sabbath, we are told:

> *"After the reading of the Torah and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, 'Brothers, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, speak.'"* — *Acts 13:15*

Paul then stood and proclaimed Yeshua from the story of Israel. The setting is important. The Torah and the Prophets were being read on the Sabbath, and it was from within that Scriptural framework that the apostles proclaimed Messiah.

Later in the same chapter, Gentiles also wanted to hear more:

> *"The next Sabbath, almost the whole city was gathered together to hear the word of God."* — *Acts 13:44*

The earliest proclamation of Yeshua was therefore not detached from the Torah and the Prophets. It grew naturally out of them.

## MOSES WROTE ABOUT ME

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Perhaps no reason for studying Torah could be stronger than the words of Yeshua Himself. Speaking to those who searched the Scriptures yet failed to recognise Him, Yeshua said:

> ***"For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote about me. But if you don't believe his writings, how will you believe my words?"*** *— John 5:46–47*

### MOSES WROTE ABOUT YESHUA.

That means Torah is not merely a collection of ancient laws and historical events. Within its pages are patterns, promises, shadows and prophetic pictures that point us toward Messiah.

The Passover lamb speaks of Him. The manna from heaven speaks of Him. The Rock in the wilderness speaks of Him. The tabernacle and priesthood speak of Him. The appointed Feasts speak of Him. The sacrifices, deliverances, covenants and great events of Torah continually prepare the reader to recognise the One who was to come.

Yeshua did not say that believing in Him should cause us to disregard Moses. He made the connection in the opposite direction: "If you believed Moses, you would believe me." And then He gave the sobering counterpart: "If you don't believe his writings, how will you believe my words?"

This changes the way we approach the Torah. We are not returning to Moses instead of following Yeshua. We are reading Moses because we follow Yeshua, and because Yeshua Himself told us that Moses wrote about Him.

After His resurrection, Yeshua demonstrated precisely this way of reading Scripture. On the road to Emmaus:

> ***"Beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he explained to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."*** *— Luke 24:27*

Beginning with Moses, Yeshua showed His disciples the things written concerning Himself. That is the spirit in which these Weekly Torah Portion booklets are offered.

Each week we will walk through another portion of Torah, allowing Scripture to tell its own story while following the threads that run through the Prophets, the Writings and the Apostolic Scriptures. Along the way we will look for the patterns of redemption, covenant, Kingdom and restoration —and above all, we will look for Yeshua.

## "HE WROTE ABOUT ME."

So open the Torah. Give ear. And let us discover what Moses has to tell us about Messiah.

# A PRAYER BEFORE WE BEGIN

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The Psalmist prays directly to YHVH:

> ***"Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things out of your Torah."***
>
> ***— Psalm 119:18***

And so, before opening this week's portion, let us make that prayer our own:

> *YHVH, open our eyes as we open Your Word. Give us ears to hear and hearts ready to receive. Show us the wondrous things in Your Torah, and above all, help us to recognise Yeshua, the One of whom Moses wrote. Lead us by Your Spirit into truth, understanding and faithful obedience. Amen.*

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THE TORAH

# LECH LECHA

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*Go Forth, Yourself*

Genesis 12:1–17:27

The call, covenant and promised Seed.

## The Call, the Covenant and the Promise

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The opening words of Genesis 12 mark one of the great turning points in the unfolding revelation of YHVH. From the account of creation, the entrance of sin, the judgement of the Flood and the rebellion at Babel, Scripture now directs our attention to one man through whom the purposes of God will reach the nations of the earth. His name is Abram.

The nations at Babel had sought to establish their own greatness, building a city and tower in an attempt to make a name for themselves. Yet immediately afterwards, YHVH calls Abram and promises to make his name great. The contrast is deliberate. What men had attempted to establish through their own strength, YHVH would accomplish through His gracious promise.

The call begins with two Hebrew words: *Lech Lecha*. Abram is commanded to go forth from his country, his relatives and his father's house, towards a land that YHVH Himself will reveal. The call is personal, demanding both departure and trust. Abram is not presented with a complete account of the journey ahead. He receives the word of YHVH, and that word becomes sufficient reason to obey.

Hebrews 11:8 identifies the foundation of his response: faith. Abram obeyed the call and departed without knowing where he was going. His obedience was not an attempt to earn the promise, but the visible expression of his confidence in the One who had spoken.

Here we encounter a principle that runs throughout Scripture. The grace of YHVH establishes the promise; faith receives it; and obedience gives expression to that faith. The promises themselves are extraordinary. YHVH declares that He will make Abram into a great nation, bless him, make his name great and cause all the families of

the earth to be blessed through him. The calling of one man is therefore inseparable from the redemption of the nations.

Paul recognises the significance of this declaration in Galatians 3:8, explaining that Scripture proclaimed the Gospel beforehand to Abraham through the promise that the nations would be blessed in him. He goes on to identify Messiah as the promised Seed and declares that those who belong to Messiah are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise (Galatians 3:16, 29).

The Gospel, therefore, does not appear as an unexpected departure from the Torah. The promise given to Abram already directs us towards Yeshua, in whom the blessing of Abraham reaches those who believe. And there is something deeply personal in this calling. Abram must leave what is familiar and learn to walk in dependence upon YHVH. He must discover that the security of the covenant rests not in human achievement, but in the faithfulness of the One who makes the promise.

Throughout this portion, we shall follow that journey: from the first call to the promised inheritance, from the altars of thanksgiving to the encounter with Melchizedek, and from the covenant of promise to the birth of hope where human possibility has reached its limits.

The journey begins with a command to go forth. Its ultimate purpose is revealed in Yeshua Messiah, the promised Seed, through whom the families of the earth are invited into the blessing of Abraham.

# Called Out — Faith That Walks

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## From Ur to the Land of Promise

The calling of Abram began before his arrival in Canaan. Stephen tells us in Acts 7:2–4 that the God of glory appeared to Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia, before he settled in Haran. Joshua 24:2 adds that Terah, Abram's father, had served other gods.

Abram was therefore called from a world in which idolatry was deeply established. Ur and Haran were major centres of worship of Sîn, also known as Nanna, the Mesopotamian moon-god. Yet the God of glory appeared to Abram and called him into a relationship founded upon His revealed word.

Joshua 24:3 records YHVH's own description of Abraham's journey: He took him from beyond the River and led him through the land of Canaan. Abram was not merely leaving one country for another. The God of glory who had called him would also direct his steps through the land of promise.

Yeshua later describes His sheep as those who hear His voice and follow Him (John 10:27). Abram's life gives us an early picture of that relationship: a continuing walk with the One who speaks, leads and remains faithful to His promise.

## The Tent and the Altar

As Abram journeys through Canaan, two things begin to characterise his life: the tent in which he dwells and the altar at which he worships. The tent reveals that he is a sojourner. Although YHVH has promised him the land, he does not yet possess the inheritance in its fullness. He must walk by faith in a promise whose complete fulfilment lies ahead.

The altar reveals his relationship with the One who has made that promise. At Shechem, YHVH appears to Abram and declares that the land will be given to his offspring. Abram responds by building an altar. Later, between Bethel and Ai, he builds another and calls upon the name of YHVH (Genesis 12:6–8). Notice the order. YHVH appears and promises; Abram responds in worship.

We encountered the same principle in Noach, who built an altar after his deliverance from the Flood. Worship follows grace. Thanksgiving arises from what YHVH has already accomplished. The New Covenant develops this principle in Hebrews 13:15, where believers are called to offer the sacrifice of praise through Yeshua.

Abram's journey was therefore not merely towards a geographical destination. He was learning to live as a worshipper in the presence of YHVH. Hebrews 11:9–10 reveals that Abraham looked forward to a city whose architect and builder is God. How striking this is when compared with Babel.

Mankind had attempted to build a city that would establish its own greatness. Abraham looked towards a city established by YHVH Himself. His journey points beyond the immediate circumstances of his life towards the heavenly Jerusalem and the coming Kingdom, where the purposes of YHVH will be fulfilled.

## Faith Tested in Egypt

Yet the journey of faith was not without difficulty. When famine came upon Canaan, Abram went down into Egypt. There, fear for his own safety led him to conceal the full truth concerning Sarai, placing her in danger. The man who had responded faithfully to the call was still learning to trust YHVH in threatening circumstances.

Scripture does not conceal his weakness. Neither does it suggest that the covenant promise has failed. YHVH intervenes, preserving Sarai and bringing her safely out of Pharaoh's household. Abram departs Egypt with his wife and possessions.

The episode anticipates a pattern that will later become central to Israel's history. Abraham's descendants will likewise go down into Egypt, encounter Pharaoh, witness divine judgement and depart with possessions.

The correspondence draws our attention towards the greater Exodus and, ultimately, towards the redemption accomplished through Yeshua Messiah. Through Abram's weakness and uncertainty, the faithfulness of YHVH remains unchanged. The promise rests upon the One who has spoken.

# The Covenant of Promise — The Gospel Preached to Abraham

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## Blessing for the Nations

The promises of Genesis 12:2–3 are among the most important declarations in the unfolding revelation of Scripture. YHVH promises to make Abram a great nation, bless him, make his name great and extend blessing through him to all the families of the earth. The calling of one man is therefore inseparable from the purposes of YHVH for the nations.

Paul identifies this promise as the Gospel proclaimed beforehand to Abraham (Galatians 3:8). This is a remarkable declaration. The Gospel did not first appear when the apostles began preaching after the resurrection. Its foundations were already being revealed through the covenant promises given to Abraham. Indeed, the promise reaches further back still, to the Seed of the woman who would overcome the serpent.

The Torah given through Moses did not annul the covenant promise previously established by YHVH (Galatians 3:17). The blessing promised to Abraham remained secure, and its fulfilment would come through the appointed Seed, Yeshua Messiah.

## The Promised Seed

Throughout the account of Abraham, YHVH repeatedly speaks of his offspring. They will become a great multitude, compared with the dust of the earth and the stars of heaven. Yet the promise has a particular Messianic centre.

In Galatians 3:16, Paul identifies Messiah as the promised Seed. The Hebrew word *Zera* can describe an individual descendant or offspring

collectively, and Paul's teaching directs our attention towards the One through whom the covenant reaches its appointed fulfilment. The promise given in Eden now unfolds through Abraham and subsequently through Isaac, Jacob, Judah and David.

Matthew begins his Gospel by identifying Yeshua Messiah as the Son of David and the Son of Abraham. He is the promised King and the Seed through whom the families of the earth will receive blessing. Yet the promise does not end with His earthly ancestry.

Paul declares that those who belong to Messiah are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise (Galatians 3:29). Through Yeshua, the blessing promised to Abraham reaches those who believe, gathering a people from among the nations. The great multitude of Revelation 7, drawn from every nation, tribe, people and language, presents a glorious picture of that blessing.

The nations once scattered at Babel are represented among those redeemed through the Lamb. The promise has reached the nations through the appointed Seed.

## The Land and the Inheritance

The covenant also includes a definite land. At Shechem, YHVH promises the land to Abram's offspring. Following the separation from Lot, He renews the promise and commands Abram to look in every direction and walk through the land He has undertaken to give him (Genesis 13:14–17). The inheritance is a gift.

Abram has not conquered it or purchased it. YHVH declares His intention to give it. Nevertheless, Abram lives as a sojourner, awaiting the fulfilment of what has been promised. Genesis 15 will reveal more concerning the generations that must pass before his descendants possess the land, while Genesis 17 will reaffirm the covenant and the inheritance.

The promise is rooted in actual history and geography. It is not merely an abstract spiritual principle. Yet Scripture also reveals a greater horizon. Romans 4:13 speaks of Abraham and his offspring as heirs of the world, while Hebrews 11 directs our attention towards the city established by God.

The promise ultimately reaches towards the Kingdom of YHVH and the renewal of creation. The earthly inheritance and the greater Kingdom hope belong within the same unfolding testimony of covenant faithfulness. Abraham looked towards what YHVH had promised.

Through Yeshua Messiah, we look towards its everlasting fulfilment.

# Two Kingdoms — Lot and Melchizedek

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## Faith and Sight

When Abram returned from Egypt, he came again to the place of the altar between Bethel and Ai. Yet prosperity now presented a different challenge. Both Abram and Lot possessed substantial flocks, herds and households. Their possessions had become so great that the land could no longer support them together, and strife arose between their herdsmen.

Abram sought peace. Rather than insisting upon his seniority, he invited Lot to choose where he would settle. His response reveals a man learning to live securely in the promise of YHVH. He did not need to grasp the best visible opportunity, because his inheritance rested upon the word of the One who had called him. Lot lifted his eyes towards the plain of the Jordan.

Genesis describes a well-watered region, attractive in appearance and compared with the garden of YHVH and the land of Egypt. Lot chose the plain and journeyed eastward, eventually settling near Sodom. The movement eastward recalls an important theme from the opening chapters of Genesis, where the consequences of rebellion and exile are repeatedly associated with movement away from the place of divine fellowship.

The direction itself is not sinful, but within this account the contrast is striking. Abram remains in the land of promise, while Lot moves towards the prosperous cities of the plain. Lot's choice was based upon what he could see. Yet the people of Sodom were exceedingly wicked before YHVH.

Peter later describes Lot as righteous and distressed by the wickedness surrounding him (2 Peter 2:7–8). Nevertheless, his choice brought him

dangerously close to a corrupt society. The most attractive circumstances do not necessarily reveal the purposes of YHVH. After Lot had separated from Abram, YHVH renewed the promise of the land and commanded Abram to walk through it.

One man had chosen what appeared immediately desirable. The other continued to walk in dependence upon the promise.

## Abram Rescues Lot

Genesis 14 brings the consequences of Lot's situation dramatically into view. War breaks out between powerful kings, and Sodom is defeated. Its goods and inhabitants are carried away, including Lot and his household. When Abram hears of his relative's captivity, he does not abandon him.

Gathering 318 trained men born in his household, Abram sets out in pursuit. He is accompanied by his Amorite allies, Mamre, Eshcol and Aner (Genesis 14:13, 24).

Pursuing the invading kings as far as Dan, Abram divides his forces and launches a night attack. The enemy is defeated and pursued as far as Hobah, north of Damascus. Lot is rescued, together with the other captives and their possessions (Genesis 14:14–16).

The rescue reveals both courage and faithfulness. The man who had willingly surrendered first choice of the land now risks his household to deliver the one who had separated from him.

Yet the victory also prepares the way for one of the most remarkable encounters in the Torah. Two kings will meet Abram following his return. And between them stands a contrast that reaches to the heart of the Gospel.

## Melchizedek — King of Righteousness and Peace

Genesis 14:18 introduces Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of God Most High. His appearance is brief, yet its significance reaches

throughout Scripture. Melchizedek brings bread and wine to Abram and blesses him in the name of God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth. He acknowledges that Abram's victory has come from the One who delivered his enemies into his hand.

Abram responds by giving him a tenth of the recovered goods. The encounter brings together kingship, priesthood and blessing. Hebrews 7 explains Melchizedek's title as King of Righteousness and associates his kingship over Salem with peace.

His priesthood stands apart from the later Levitical order. He appears in Genesis long before the birth of Levi, and the writer of Hebrews uses this account to reveal the greatness of the priesthood fulfilled in Messiah. Psalm 110 provides the decisive connection.

David speaks prophetically of the One invited to sit at the right hand of YHVH, whose priesthood is established forever according to the order of Melchizedek. The New Testament identifies Yeshua as the fulfilment of this promise. His priesthood does not depend upon descent from Aaron, nor is it limited by the mortality that characterised the Levitical priests.

Yeshua ministers through the power of an indestructible life (Hebrews 7:16–17). He is the risen King-Priest, seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high. The bread and wine brought by Melchizedek also direct our attention towards the greater revelation of Messiah.

Melchizedek comes forth with bread and wine to welcome Abram following his victory. This is a wonderful moment of celebration, thanksgiving and fellowship. The King of Righteousness and Peace blesses Abram and gives glory to God Most High, who has delivered his enemies into his hand.

Here we see a beautiful prophetic picture of Yeshua, our everlasting King-Priest, who has secured a far greater victory through His death and resurrection. At the table with His disciples, Yeshua took bread

and wine and revealed their covenant significance: His body given for us and His blood poured out for our redemption.

The bread and wine of Melchizedek's victorious welcome direct us towards the greater covenant fellowship established through Messiah. Abram returned victorious over earthly kings; Yeshua has conquered sin and death, opening the way to everlasting life for those who belong to Him.

The blessing of Melchizedek thus points towards the triumph of our risen King-Priest, through whom the promises of YHVH reach their glorious fulfilment.

### The King of Sodom — Another Offer

The king of Sodom then offers Abram the recovered possessions, asking that the people be returned to him. Abram refuses. He has sworn an oath to YHVH, God Most High, and will not permit the ruler of Sodom to claim that he has made Abram rich.

The contrast is deliberate. Melchizedek blesses Abram in the name of the One who possesses heaven and earth. The king of Sodom proposes an arrangement centred upon earthly possessions. Abram will not allow the wealth of Sodom to become the explanation for his blessing.

He knows where his inheritance comes from. The kingdoms of this world may offer status, security and prosperity, but they cannot bestow the inheritance promised by YHVH. Abram has learned to distinguish between the rewards of men and the blessing of God.

It is therefore particularly significant that the next chapter opens with YHVH declaring Himself to be Abram's shield and exceedingly great reward. The man who refused the rewards of Sodom will now receive a deeper revelation of the One who is Himself the source of his inheritance.

# The Covenant Cut — Righteousness Through Faith

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## The Word of YHVH and the Promise of Life

Genesis 15 opens with the Word of YHVH coming to Abram in a vision, assuring him that he need not fear, for YHVH is his shield and exceedingly great reward. Abram has rescued Lot, received the blessing of Melchizedek and refused the wealth of Sodom. Yet he remains troubled by a question.

How can the promises of descendants and inheritance be fulfilled while he remains without a son? YHVH answers by assuring him that his heir will come from his own body. Then comes the remarkable scene recorded in Genesis 15:5.

YHVH brings Abram outside and directs his attention towards heaven. He is told to count the stars, if indeed he is able to number them. Such will be his offspring. The promise is extraordinary. Abram has no son, yet YHVH directs his attention towards a multitude beyond human counting.

The man who sees only the limitations of his circumstances is invited to consider the limitless power of the One who has spoken. And it is here that we encounter a possibility worthy of careful consideration.

## The Morning Star — The One and the Many

We commonly imagine Abram standing beneath a magnificent night sky, surrounded by countless shining stars. It is a natural picture, and Genesis certainly permits such an understanding. But consider another possibility.

What if YHVH brought Abram outside as dawn approached?

As the eastern sky began to brighten, the countless stars of the night would gradually disappear from human sight. They would remain in their places, although concealed by the increasing light. And what if, amid that approaching dawn, one brilliant Morning Star remained visible? The picture would be extraordinary.

The multitude was there, although no longer visible to Abram. One brilliant light remained before his eyes, while the innumerable company was hidden from sight. Genesis does not tell us that the encounter occurred at dawn, nor does it identify a particular star. Nevertheless, the proposed setting is possible, and its significance becomes particularly striking when considered through the later revelation of Messiah.

In Revelation 22:16, Yeshua identifies Himself as the Bright Morning Star. Paul, in Galatians 3:16, identifies Messiah as the promised Seed of Abraham. He then explains that those who belong to Messiah are themselves Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise. The One and the many are inseparably connected.

Through the One promised Seed, a multitude beyond numbering will receive the blessing of the covenant. Yeshua Himself teaches a corresponding principle in John 12:24. A single grain of wheat must fall into the earth and die if it is to bear much fruit. Through His death and resurrection, the promised Seed brings forth a harvest of redeemed lives.

What a remarkable picture this gives us when we return to Abram beneath the heavens. The countless stars remain, though hidden from sight. One brilliant Morning Star appears as the light of day approaches. And through the One promised Seed, the multitude will receive its inheritance. Peter adds another beautiful dimension.

In 2 Peter 1:18–19, he recalls the heavenly testimony concerning Yeshua upon the holy mountain and directs believers towards the prophetic

word, compared with a light shining in darkness until the day dawns and the Morning Star arises in their hearts.

The prophetic word, the dawning day and the revelation of Messiah belong together. Yeshua Himself declared that Abraham rejoiced to see His day, saw it and was glad (John 8:56). Abraham's faith therefore reached beyond the expectation of a natural heir to the coming of the promised Messiah.

Seen through this revelation, the vision of the stars becomes a magnificent picture of the Gospel. Yeshua is the Bright Morning Star, the One promised Seed through whom a multitude beyond numbering will receive the blessing of Abraham. The One and the many are united in the purposes of YHVH: through Messiah, the promised inheritance reaches all who belong to Him.

And immediately following the vision, Genesis brings us to the very heart of the Gospel:

**Abram believed YHVH.**

### Righteousness Through Faith — The Heart of the Gospel

Genesis 15:6 stands among the most important verses in the entire account of redemption. Abram believes YHVH, and his faith is credited to him for righteousness. Nothing in the passage suggests that Abram has earned this standing through his own achievements. He remains without the promised son. He cannot produce the fulfilment by human strength.

He possesses the word of YHVH, and he believes the One who has spoken. This is the foundation of righteousness through faith. Paul devotes Romans 4 to the significance of this declaration. Abraham becomes the great example of righteousness received through faith rather than earned as a reward for works.

But Paul takes the argument further. He describes Abraham's faith in the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that do not exist. He then applies the same principle to those who believe in the God who raised Yeshua from the dead. The connection is profound.

Abraham believed YHVH concerning a promised son and a multitude beyond human possibility. We believe YHVH concerning the Son whom He has raised from the dead, through whom everlasting life is given. Both rest upon confidence in the power and faithfulness of the same God.

Paul explains that the declaration concerning Abraham's righteousness was written not for his sake alone, but also for those who believe in the One who raised Yeshua our Lord from the dead (Romans 4:23–25). Here the Gospel comes into full view.

The death and resurrection of Yeshua are not an unrelated message added to the faith of Abraham. They are the fulfilment towards which the covenant promises were directed. This is why Abraham's faith is so central to our understanding of salvation. He believed the promise of YHVH.

And the One in whom that promise reaches its fulfilment is Yeshua Messiah. Yet living faith does not remain without fruit. James reminds us that Abraham's faith worked together with his obedience and was brought to maturity through his actions. Paul establishes the foundation of righteousness through faith; James reveals the living character of the faith that receives it.

Grace establishes the promise. Faith receives it. Obedience expresses that faith in the life of the believer. The covenant was not founded upon Abram's ability to accomplish what YHVH had promised. It was founded upon the faithfulness of the One who gives life where human possibility has come to an end.

## From the Stars to the Setting Sun

The narrative now moves from the promise of offspring to the assurance of inheritance. YHVH reminds Abram that He brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give him the land. Abram asks how he may know that he will inherit it. YHVH instructs him to bring several animals for a covenant ceremony.

Abram prepares them, dividing the larger animals and arranging their halves opposite one another, while leaving the birds undivided. When birds of prey descend upon the carcasses, he drives them away. Time passes as the preparations unfold. Genesis then tells us that the sun is going down. A deep sleep falls upon Abram, accompanied by terror and great darkness.

The movement through the narrative is striking. If Abram's vision of the heavens began before dawn, the account may be understood as progressing through daylight towards sunset. The promise concerning the stars would stand at the beginning of this sequence, while the covenant ceremony would reach its decisive moment after darkness had fallen.

The exact starting hour is not stated, and the passage does not establish that all these events belonged to one calendar day. Nevertheless, the progression from the heavenly vision to the descending darkness provides a remarkable setting for the revelation that follows. Abram is about to learn that the promised inheritance will not be possessed immediately.

His descendants must first experience suffering, bondage and deliverance. And YHVH will Himself secure the covenant.

YHVH also reveals the future affliction of Abraham's descendants, speaking of four hundred years before their promised deliverance. Their oppressors will be judged, and they will come out with great possessions, returning to the land at the appointed time (Genesis 15:13–16). Even the generations of suffering lie within the foreknowledge of YHVH. His covenant will not fail, and His promise will be fulfilled.

## The Smoking Furnace and the Flaming Torch

When the sun has set and darkness has fallen, Genesis records a remarkable sight. A smoking furnace and a flaming torch pass between the divided pieces. The covenant ceremony reaches its appointed conclusion.

In the ancient world, passing between the portions of divided animals was associated with solemn covenant obligations. Jeremiah 34:18–20 provides another biblical reference to such a ceremony and the seriousness of breaking a covenant made in this manner. But there is an extraordinary distinction in Genesis 15. The narrative does not describe Abram walking between the pieces.

He has been overcome by a deep sleep, while the symbols of the divine presence pass between them. The significance is profound. The fulfilment of the promise rests ultimately upon YHVH Himself.

The smoking furnace and flaming torch also recall the later manifestations of divine presence associated with Israel's deliverance from Egypt and the revelation at Sinai. The covenant-making God who appeared to Abram would lead his descendants through the wilderness. His faithfulness would sustain the promise through every generation, until its fulfilment in Yeshua Messiah.

Abram cannot produce the promised son, deliver his descendants from future bondage or establish the everlasting inheritance by his own power.

But YHVH can.

## The Promise Secured in Messiah

We can now appreciate the remarkable movement of Genesis 15. The Word of YHVH comes to Abram. The promised offspring are compared with the stars. Abram believes, and righteousness is credited to him. The future suffering and deliverance of his descendants are revealed. Finally, the covenant is confirmed as the divine presence passes between the divided pieces.

Every stage directs our attention towards the faithfulness of YHVH. And through the revelation of Yeshua, the greater fulfilment comes into view. The promised Seed has come. He has borne the curse, overcome death and risen in victory. Through Him, those who believe receive the blessing promised to Abraham and become heirs according to the covenant.

There is a beautiful correspondence between Abram's faith and our own. Abram believed in the God who could bring forth life where none seemed possible. We believe in the God who raised Yeshua from the dead.

Abram received the promise of a multitude through the appointed Seed. Through Yeshua, that multitude is being gathered from the nations. Abram was counted righteous through faith.

Those who believe in Yeshua are likewise justified through faith, receiving the righteousness that comes from YHVH.

The Gospel is not a departure from the covenant of Abraham; it reveals the fulfilment of its promise. The picture of the Morning Star and the hidden multitude brings its central truth into focus: the many receive their inheritance through the One promised Seed, Yeshua Messiah.

The heavens declared a multitude beyond numbering. But the promise rested in One.

**And Abram believed YHVH.**

# The Flesh and the Promise — The Everlasting Covenant

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## Waiting for the Promise

The covenant of Genesis 15 had established a wonderful certainty. Abram believed YHVH, and his faith was counted to him for righteousness. Yet believing the promise and waiting for its fulfilment are not always easy. Years passed, and Sarai remained without a child.

In Genesis 16, she proposed that Abram should have a child through Hagar, her Egyptian servant. Such an arrangement was recognisable within the customs of the ancient world, but it was not presented as an instruction from YHVH. Abram accepted Sarai's proposal, and Hagar conceived.

The consequences were immediate. Conflict entered the household, Hagar began to despise her mistress, and Sarai treated her so harshly that she fled into the wilderness. The difficulty lay not in desiring the fulfilment of the promise, but in attempting to accomplish by human initiative what YHVH had undertaken to provide. The promise was certain.

Its fulfilment would come through the means appointed by YHVH.

## The God Who Sees and Hears

Hagar's experience also reveals something beautiful about the character of YHVH. Fleeing from Sarai, she finds herself alone in the wilderness. Yet she has not escaped the attention of the God of Abraham. The Angel of YHVH finds her beside a spring of water and addresses her personally.

He knows her circumstances and the child she carries. Hagar is told that she will bear a son named Ishmael, meaning *God hears*, because YHVH has heard her affliction. The woman who had become entangled in the household's attempt to secure the promise discovers that YHVH has not forgotten her.

She responds by acknowledging the God who sees her. The place becomes associated with Beer Lahai Roi, the well of the Living One who sees. Hagar is therefore more than a figure in a later theological argument. She is a suffering woman whom YHVH sees, hears and addresses.

Nor is Ishmael forgotten. YHVH promises that his descendants will become exceedingly numerous. Later, He confirms that Ishmael will be blessed and will father twelve princes. Yet a distinction remains between the blessing promised to Ishmael and the particular covenant line established through Isaac.

Both truths belong to the account.

### Two Sons — Flesh and Promise

Paul draws upon these events in Galatians 4:21–31 to explain the difference between bondage and freedom. Hagar and Sarah become figures within his argument concerning two covenantal conditions. The son born through Hagar represents birth according to the flesh, while Isaac is identified with the promise.

Paul connects Hagar, within this figurative interpretation, with Sinai and the Jerusalem of his day, while speaking of the Jerusalem above as free. His concern is not to deny the compassion shown to Hagar or the blessing given to Ishmael. He is explaining the difference between seeking righteousness through human effort and receiving the inheritance through divine promise.

The covenant cannot be fulfilled through the strength of the flesh. Neither can righteousness be earned through human achievement. The promise must be received by faith.

Paul therefore identifies those who belong to Messiah as children of promise, following the pattern of Isaac. Through Yeshua, we become heirs of an inheritance that originates in the grace of YHVH.

## New Names — A New Beginning

Genesis 17 opens thirteen years after the birth of Ishmael. Abram is now ninety-nine years old when YHVH appears to him as El Shaddai, God Almighty, and calls him to walk before Him and be blameless. The Hebrew word *Tamim* conveys completeness, integrity and wholeheartedness. It also appears in descriptions of acceptable sacrificial animals.

Here Abram is called to wholehearted faithfulness in his relationship with YHVH. The command to walk recalls the beginning of his journey. The man who was called to go forth must continue walking before the One who called him.

YHVH then renews His covenant, promising that Abram will become the father of many nations. And his name is changed. Abram, commonly understood as *exalted father*, becomes Abraham, *father of a multitude*.

The new name declares the certainty of the divine promise before its fulfilment can be seen. Abraham has not yet received the promised son through Sarah, but YHVH already speaks of him as the father of many nations. The name itself becomes a testimony of faith.

Sarai also receives a new name: Sarah. YHVH promises to bless her and give Abraham a son through her; nations and kings will descend from her. The covenant line will continue through Isaac, whose birth will testify to the faithfulness of the One who made the promise.

## Circumcision — The Sign and the Heart

Genesis 17 introduces circumcision as the sign of the covenant established with Abraham and his descendants. Every male within the covenant household is to receive this sign, ordinarily on the eighth day after birth. Yet Scripture progressively reveals that the outward sign must be accompanied by the inward reality of a heart devoted to YHVH.

Moses commands Israel to circumcise their hearts and cease being stubborn (Deuteronomy 10:16). Later, he declares that YHVH Himself will circumcise the hearts of His people so that they may love Him and live (Deuteronomy 30:6). The New Covenant develops this promise.

Jeremiah speaks of the Torah being written upon the hearts of YHVH's people. Paul likewise explains the importance of circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit (Romans 2:28–29). Colossians 2:11–12 connects the spiritual putting away of the flesh with our union with Messiah in His death and resurrection. The outward sign directs our attention towards the necessity of inward transformation.

But the order established in Abraham's experience remains essential. Romans 4:11 explains that Abraham received circumcision as a sign and seal of the righteousness of faith which he already possessed while uncircumcised. He was counted righteous before receiving the covenant sign.

Circumcision did not purchase the righteousness that YHVH had already credited to him. This is decisive for our understanding of the Gospel. Through faith in the risen Messiah, we receive the grace of YHVH and are called to live as those whose hearts are transformed by His Spirit.

## Isaac — The Appointed Son

When YHVH declares that Sarah will bear a son, Abraham falls upon his face and laughs. The promise appears astonishing. Abraham is approaching one hundred years of age, and Sarah is approaching ninety. Yet the One who gives the promise is not limited by the weakness of human flesh.

Abraham pleads that Ishmael might live before YHVH. The answer is gracious but unmistakable. Ishmael will be blessed, but the covenant will be established through Isaac, whom Sarah will bear at the appointed time.

The name Isaac, *Yitzchaq*, is associated with laughter. What appears impossible to human expectation will become a testimony of divine faithfulness. The promised son will not be the achievement of human ingenuity; he will be received through the faithfulness of YHVH. Through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the covenant line will continue until the appointed Seed comes into the world, Yeshua Messiah. The covenant remains secure because the One who established it is faithful.

The Haftarah takes up this same assurance. Through Isaiah, YHVH addresses Abraham's descendants and reminds them that He has neither forgotten nor rejected His people.

THE PROPHETS

# HAFTARAH

*Isaiah 40:27–41:16*

Hope, strength, help and covenant faithfulness.

# Those Who Wait Upon YHVH — The Strength of the Covenant

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## The God Who Never Grows Weary

The Haftarah of Lech Lecha brings us to one of the most beautiful declarations of covenant faithfulness in the writings of Isaiah. The prophet addresses a people who fear that YHVH has overlooked their circumstances. Their way appears hidden, and their cause seems forgotten.

Yet Isaiah answers by directing their attention away from their difficulties and towards the character of the everlasting God. YHVH is the Creator of the ends of the earth. He neither faints nor grows weary, and His understanding cannot be measured.

The contrast is remarkable. Even the young and strong may stumble, but those who wait upon YHVH will renew their strength. They will rise upon wings like eagles, run without becoming weary and walk without fainting.

The emphasis is not upon the natural strength of man. It is upon the unfailing strength of the One in whom he trusts. The God who called Abraham out of Mesopotamia remains the God who sustains his descendants.

His covenant has not been forgotten.

## Qavah — Waiting in Hope

The Hebrew word translated as *wait* in Isaiah 40:31 is *Qavah*. It conveys expectation, hope and patient confidence in the One whose word cannot fail. An interesting earlier occurrence of the same Hebrew root

appears in Genesis 1:9, where the waters are gathered together at the command of YHVH.

In Isaiah, the word expresses expectant waiting rather than the physical gathering of waters, yet both passages direct us towards the power of the One who brings His purposes to fulfilment. The related Hebrew noun *Tikvah* means hope. Waiting upon YHVH is therefore not passive resignation.

It is the confidence that the God who has spoken will accomplish what He has promised. Genesis 49:18 provides a remarkable earlier expression of this hope. In the midst of Jacob's prophetic words concerning his sons, he declares that he has waited for the salvation of YHVH. The Hebrew uses *Qavah*, while the word translated as salvation is *Yeshuah*.

Here Jacob expresses his expectation of the salvation of YHVH. How fitting that this should direct our thoughts towards Yeshua, whose name declares that YHVH saves. Abraham waited for the promise. Isaac and Jacob inherited that expectation. The generations that followed were called to trust the covenant-making God even when fulfilment seemed far away.

Faith believes what YHVH has spoken. Hope looks towards its fulfilment. And obedience continues to walk according to His word.

### Come to Me — The Promise of Rest

Isaiah's promise to the weary finds a beautiful Messianic connection in the invitation of Yeshua. In Matthew 11:28–30, Yeshua calls those who labour and are heavily burdened to come to Him for rest. He invites them to take His yoke upon themselves and learn from Him.

This is not an invitation to abandon obedience. A yoke speaks of learning and walking under the direction of a master. But the Master is Yeshua, meek and humble in heart, whose burden is light.

The weary are not directed towards greater confidence in their own strength. They are called to come to Him. The prophet declares that those who wait upon YHVH will walk without fainting.

Yeshua invites the weary to receive rest through Him. The promises illuminate one another. The life of faith is sustained by dependence upon the One who calls us.

### Abraham, My Friend

Isaiah 41 turns our attention towards the sovereign purposes of YHVH among the nations. Rulers rise and kingdoms fall, but YHVH declares Himself to be the First and the Last. He is the One who calls the generations from the beginning.

Then comes a magnificent declaration to Israel. YHVH addresses His servant, the people He has chosen, the offspring of Abraham, His friend. The connection with our Torah portion could hardly be more direct.

The nation is reminded that its calling rests upon the covenant established with Abraham. The promises have not been forgotten. Even after generations of difficulty, YHVH declares that He has chosen His people and has not rejected them.

And notice how He describes Abraham. **My friend.** The man who left his country by faith, built altars, believed the promise and walked before YHVH is remembered in this extraordinary relationship.

James 2:23 later connects Abraham's friendship with God to the declaration that his faith was counted for righteousness. The covenant was never merely a legal arrangement concerning descendants and territory. It established a living relationship between YHVH and those whom He called.

And through Yeshua Messiah, the promised Seed, the blessing of that relationship reaches those who believe.

## Fear Not — I Am With You

Isaiah 41:10 contains one of the great assurances of Scripture. YHVH commands His people not to fear, because He is with them. He promises to strengthen, help and uphold them with His righteous right hand.

These are covenant promises. The descendants of Abraham are reminded that their security rests upon the presence and faithfulness of the God who has chosen them. The Hebrew verb *Azar*, meaning to help or assist, appears elsewhere in the blessings spoken over the patriarchal family, including Jacob's blessing upon Joseph in Genesis 49:25.

The promise of divine help expresses the faithfulness of YHVH towards those who depend upon Him. Isaiah develops the assurance further. YHVH declares that He will take hold of His people's right hand and tell them not to fear, for He will help them.

Consider the tenderness and strength of that picture. The everlasting Creator, whose power governs the nations, takes hold of the hand of His people. They need not face their difficulties as though everything depended upon their own strength.

YHVH Himself undertakes to sustain them. The same assurance appears at the beginning of Genesis 15, where YHVH declares Himself to be Abram's shield and exceedingly great reward. The covenant-making God has not changed.

And the New Testament carries this assurance into the words of Yeshua. On the night before His suffering, He tells His disciples to be courageous because He has overcome the world (John 16:33). Following His resurrection, He sends them to make disciples of the nations and promises to remain with them until the end of the age (Matthew 28:18–20).

The promise of divine presence runs throughout the unfolding revelation of redemption. We are not promised a life without opposition. We are assured that the One who has overcome the world will not abandon those who belong to Him.

## The First and the Last — The Everlasting Redeemer

There is another remarkable Messianic connection in Isaiah 41. YHVH identifies Himself as the First and the Last, declaring His authority over the generations. In Revelation 1:17–18, the risen Yeshua likewise declares Himself to be the First and the Last, the Living One who was dead and is alive for evermore.

The language of Isaiah finds a profound expression in the revelation of the risen Messiah. The One who has conquered death holds the keys of Death and Sheol. This is the assurance upon which our hope rests.

YHVH's covenant faithfulness is not defeated by the passage of time, the rise and fall of nations or even by death itself. The resurrection of Yeshua reveals the victorious power of the God whom Abraham believed. Isaiah then addresses Israel in striking language, describing Jacob as a worm, seemingly weak before the strength of the nations.

Yet YHVH immediately declares that He will help them, identifying Himself as their Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.

The people who appeared powerless will be strengthened by their Redeemer. Those who once trembled before the nations will rejoice in YHVH and glory in the Holy One of Israel.

The promise given to Abraham has not been forgotten. The everlasting God remains faithful to His covenant, sustaining His people through every generation.

## The Promise Still Stands

As we bring Lech Lecha to its conclusion, the unity of Scripture comes wonderfully into view. Abraham heard the call of YHVH and went

forth by faith. He believed the promise of a son and a multitude beyond numbering, and his faith was counted to him for righteousness.

He received the covenant, looked towards the inheritance and learned to trust the One who gives life where human possibility has come to an end. Centuries later, Isaiah addressed Abraham's descendants and reminded them that the covenant-making God had neither forgotten nor rejected His people. Those who waited upon Him would renew their strength.

Those who feared would find help in His righteous right hand. And those who appeared weak would discover that their Redeemer remained faithful. Through Yeshua Messiah, the promised Seed, the Gospel proclaimed beforehand to Abraham has been brought into glorious revelation.

The One who died and rose again is the everlasting King-Priest, the First and the Last, and the Bright Morning Star. In Him, the blessing of Abraham reaches the nations, and through faith in Him we become heirs according to the promise. The calling of Lech Lecha therefore remains a living testimony.

We are called to hear, believe and obey. We are called to walk by faith rather than by sight. And we are called to rest our confidence in the One whose word cannot fail.

**The journey begins with the call of YHVH. It continues through faith. And its fulfilment is found in Yeshua Messiah.**

WEEKLY TORAH AND PROPHETS PORTION

# LECH LECHA

## A CALL THAT CHANGES EVERYTHING

*Lech Lecha* — "Go for yourself" — is the beginning of a remarkable journey. YHVH calls Abram to leave the familiar, to step out in faith, and to walk toward a land He will show him. In this portion we see the heart of true faith: trusting the voice of YHVH, even when the destination is unknown.

We follow Abram as he leaves Ur, passes through Haran, and eventually enters the land that YHVH promises. We see the first promises of offspring, land and blessing, the assurance that through his seed all the families of the earth will be blessed, and the powerful covenant in which YHVH passes between the pieces.

This portion points us to Yeshua — the Bright and Morning Star — the promised Seed through whom life and blessing come to many. As Abram believed, and it was counted to him as righteousness, so we are called to walk by faith, looking to the One who has gone ahead and brings us into the true and better promises.

*"I am the Bright and Morning Star."*

REVELATION 22:16



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